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### Portland Renewal : A Decade of Planning and Progress, 1951 - 1961.

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# PORTLAND RENEWAL

A DECADE OF PLANNING AND PROGRESS 1951-1961





Casper F. Cowan, Chairman



Albert C. Hobbs, Vice Chairman



James H. Burke



Edward B. Moulton



Charles W. Redman, Jr.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
PORTLAND RENEWAL  
AUTHORITY  
PORTLAND, MAINE



"For the first time in history, the people of American cities have it in their power to remake their cities as they would like them, as they would like to leave them to their children's children."

James C. Mority  
Vice President  
Sears-Roebuck Company

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To the Honorable  
City Council  
City of Portland, Maine

Gentlemen:

The report following this letter covers the highlights of renewal activities during the past ten years.

A decade is a significant milestone in any activity. For Portland the year in which we enter our second decade is of special importance in renewal efforts and achievements. It marks the beginning of our largest project, Munjoy-South; the fulfillment of our first project, Vine-Deer-Chatham, an area which has been completely cleared and converted to commercial-industrial development; and the commitment of this Agency to proceed speedily with "Downtown Project No. 1" — both of the latter designed to keep local firms in Downtown Portland. This year also finds us nearing the final phase of the Bayside Park Project, a combination of both clearance and rehabilitation.

You will recall that renewal planning was initiated during a period of self-examination of our city at the end of World War II after the combined effects of limited repairs during the depression years, and heavy use combined with inadequate repairs during the war years, became all too apparent. Voluntary community spirit was

in many areas no longer an incentive to modernize a building, or even to keep up with basic repairs. Dilapidation was spreading with increasing rapidity and, in the absence of counteractive or deterrent measures, it would surely encompass ever widening areas.

Other American communities were facing similar problems. Thus was born the federally-assisted program for the elimination and prevention of "blight" (generally known as "slums"); and the provision for needed public improvements and more and better housing for low and middle income families.

The facilities by which local communities can aid themselves and obtain assistance from the Federal government have been gradually broadened to meet the multifaceted basic shortcomings of many areas.

As our inadequacies here in Portland became increasingly apparent, we were able to make amendments and refinements in our project planning suitable for federal approval. It was found that our needs included: (1) areas requiring total clearance for residential or business re-development; (2) rehabilitation of existing structures; (3) prevention and conservation to halt the spread of

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blight; and (4) revitalization of our Downtown and Waterfront areas.

Toward these objectives the Renewal Authority has been fortunate in its close relationship with the City Council and the Planning Board — designers of the Master Plan for the city's overall development. This intergrated background is helpful in our ever present need of interpretation to the taxpayers as a whole, exemplifying the fact that the economic health of the community is for the benefit of all.

Although it is possible to use a less drastic type of treatmen in carrying out a prevention program in some neighborhoods — such as stepping up inspections, and enforcement of improved codes — those who know Portland best realize that not all deterioration can be corrected in this manner, and therefore, sometimes more extensive programs will be instituted in areas other than those already undertaken.

Our experience indicates that as a city ages, City Governments, Citizens' Committees, Chambers of Commerce and other civic boosters can, should, and must join in planning and executing community-wide improvement programs which take into consideration the people involved as well as the streets and structures.

The future of Portland depends on the organized energy of its citizens today.

Respectfully submitted,

Caspar F. Cowan, Chairman



The interrelationship of the various municipal departments in the organization for Renewal Programming is delicately balanced. In fact, a diagrammatic chart of renewal in action revolves about the central body of the City Council — the peoples' choice.

Before a renewal program starts there must be detailed surveys and plans. These are the direct responsibility of the Planning Board which reports its findings to the Renewal Authority and the City Council. The Renewal Authority is responsible for carrying out those programs requiring land clearance and/or aid through Federal participation. The Renewal Authority serves as principal contact between the City and the Federal Urban Renewal Administration.

Final plans are drawn by the Planning Board under contract with the Renewal Authority for each project. Before being submitted to the Federal Government with application for federal funds the plan must be approved by the Renewal Authority, Planning Board and City Council.

## ORGANIZATION — FOR RENEWAL

All of the City departments have specialized knowledge and abilities contributing to the analysis of a community. The Portland Public Housing Authority and the city's Welfare Department cooperate in the relocation activities. This work involves, most importantly, a contract agreement with the Child and Family Services, a United Fund agency, which is qualified to carry out personal services and consultations with each family.

When the project plan is developed, approved, and financed — the City departments continue their services in the action stage. Here again, although the Planning Board has completed its initial responsibility, it cannot end there since action will necessarily involve refining the plans, and will often require modifications and adjustments of original plans. The plans of private developers who purchase land from PRA must be reviewed by the Planning Board.

In the planning stage other departments such as the Fire Department and Health Department are closely related to the removal of fire hazard

structures, and the participation in decisions pertaining to substandard structures.

Basic to the acceptance of any Renewal Program in any area is the active participation of citizen groups in each neighborhood where a project is contemplated. Early citizen participation can do much to speed accomplishment and prevent unhappy incidents where resistance may be largely based on lack of understanding of overall community objectives.

Where renewal programs involve basic municipal areas, the participation of such civic groups as the Chamber of Commerce and Area Development Council is extremely important. In Portland, an independent citizen's committee representing interested organizations in the community, has the unique name of CURE — meaning Citizen's Urban Renewal Effort. The committee serves in an advisory capacity, reviews plans and programs, and is a "watch-dog" for the taxpayers' interests.

Of great importance to the Portland program is the close participation and interest shown by members of the City Council. Although full agreement of project plans has not always been realized, nor could it be expected, there has been a willingness to meet problems "head-on" and to negotiate changes necessary to acceptance.

Thus Portland enters its second decade of Renewal Programming with the foundation that bids fair to improve and further the accomplishments at an accelerated pace.

## THE STATUTE

The Act to create a Public Body in the City of Portland whose responsibility would be the planning and executing of a program of Urban Renewal was first voted into being in 1951 under the private and special laws of Maine.

At that time a declaration was made citing the existence of blighted areas within the City of Portland boundaries which constitute an economic and social liability. It was established that these areas were beyond remedy and control solely by regulatory processes and could not be dealt with effectively by the ordinary operations of private enterprise without the aids available through a federal-city sponsored renewal program.

The acquisition and preparation of land necessary for development in accordance with the City's Master Plan was declared a "public use" for which money may be expended and private property acquired. It was also determined that the necessity for the provision of this act should become a matter of legislative authorization in the public interest.



"Redevelopment" was defined as (1) the acquisition of land and structures necessary to proper clearance for development of blighted areas or to the prevention of the spread of conditions of blight — including structures not in themselves deteriorated;

(2) the clearance by demolition or moving of existing buildings and the construction of street, utility and site improvements essential to redevelopment, and

(3) the sale or lease of land in such areas for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial or other public use, including public housing, and public improvements such as streets, playgrounds, sewers, parks, etc.

The Portland Renewal Authority was created with the provision that its business transactions and exercise of power should be subject to the approval of the City Council. The City Council was authorized to appoint a five-person board of commissioners to serve without compensation as the governing body of the Authority. The provision for staffing by employment of an executive director and technical experts was determined, and the administrative powers of the Authority defined.

The rights of the Authority to acquire property by eminent domain when necessary and to issue bonds were specified in complete detail.

The preparation of a workable program by the City of Portland, including an official plan of action for dealing with the program within the various communities, with neighborhood participation, was deemed essential to the success of the redevelopment program.

In 1954 — a test case arose in the Portland area when ten residents challenged the constitutionality of the Urban Renewal Statute in acquiring property by eminent domain. The attack failed in the court and the bill was dismissed with the findings that "Slum clearance of blighted areas for the public health, morals, safety and welfare is a 'public use' within the meaning of the constitution."

#### **The Public Housing Referendum**

Closely related to renewal activities is the milestone achieved in 1961 when the City Council and Portland voters authorized, by referendum, 70 public housing units for the Bayside Renewal area.

A \$1,000,000 project consisting of 46 units is the first stage of this program. Large, low-income families will be given prime consideration.

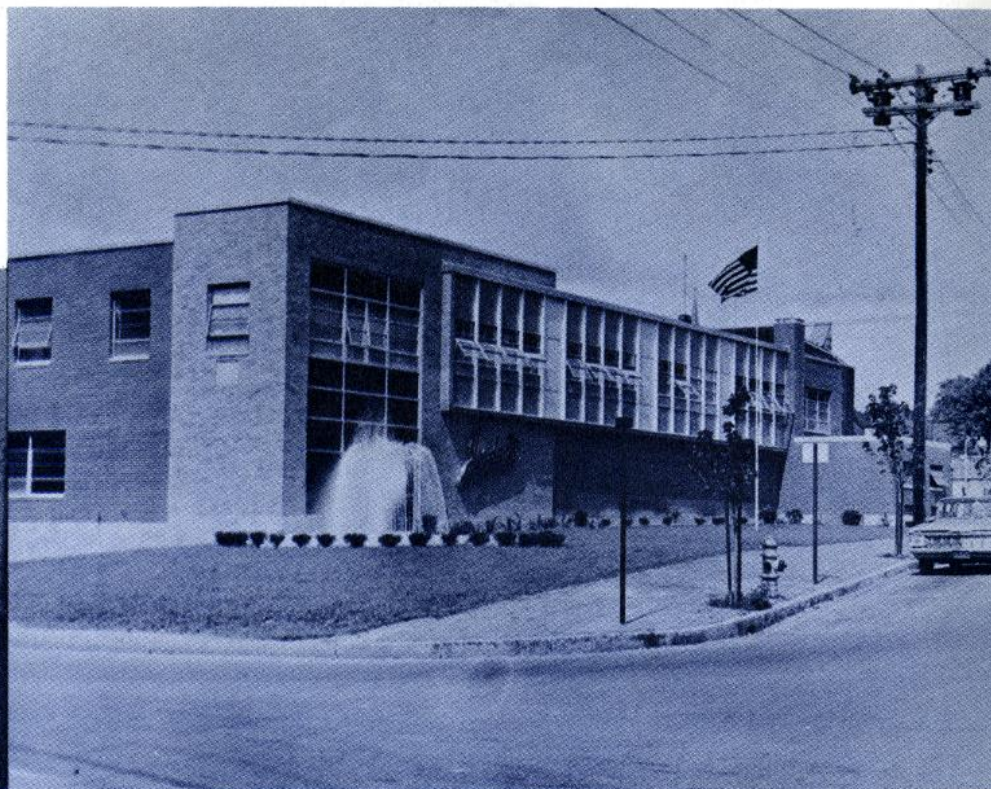
Portland showed its willingness to face up to housing and public improvement needs and the relocation requirements for a successful Urban Renewal Program.



VINE - DEER - CHATHAM —



1955



1962



A nine-acre site in the heart of the waterfront district was chosen for the first Renewal Project.

Reasons for the selection were sound. The area contained a majority of sub-standard commercial and residential structures which were used to house 64 families, 28 individuals and 27 small businesses.

Location of the area was ideal for redevelopment for industrial use. It was near a long established wholesale business district, and it was adjacent to the center of the city. And of much importance was the availability of railway connections with the Grand Trunk Railway system providing necessary freight service.

The project began in December of 1955, and is being completed in the first half of 1962. Renewal takes time — and this project was affected by the newness of the program; the need for carefully dealing with a closely-knit largely foreign-born community; and time consuming problems arising from the difficulties of relocation — the first such effort in the City and, in fact, in the State of Maine. Working procedures had to be improvised and often started all over again to meet the complexities of each situation.

At the completion of the program, however, total clearance was accomplished. Some of the families found their own new homes, and others were effectively assisted by the counseling service of the Child and Family Services' case worker. All of the 27 businesses are now successfully relocated with the exception of one which decided to go out of business.

Sixty-two structures were demolished with most of the acquisition amicably worked out by negotiation without the necessity of resorting to eminent domain procedures.

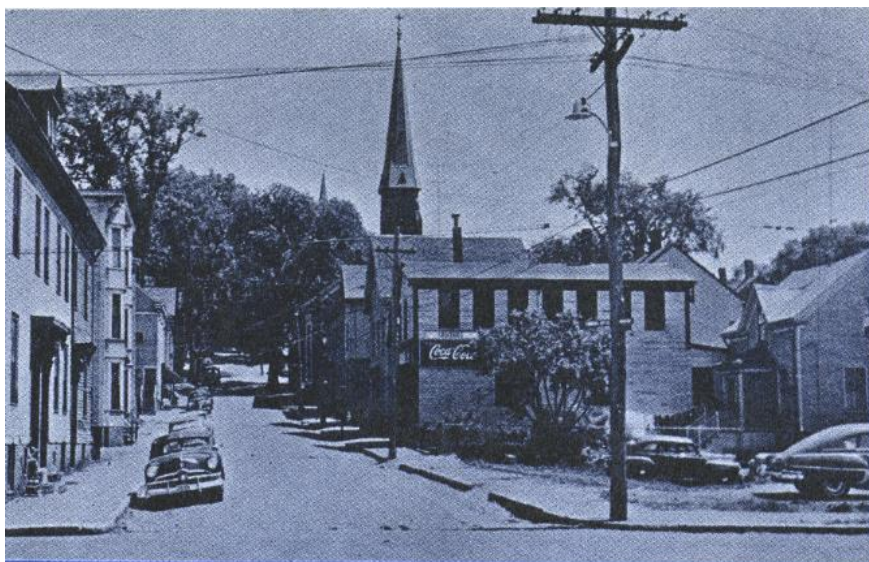
## THE FIRST PROJECT: VINE - DEER - CHATHAM

As expected, industrial development was realized and at present the following concerns are tenants in the buildings erected by private developers with financing and assistance in some cases by the Area Development Council and the Maine Industrial Business Administration.

- \* Jordan's Ready-To-Eat-Meats, Inc., occupies a \$600,000 modern plant containing over \$300,000 worth of equipment.
- \* Casco Printing Company  
Maine State Liquor Store  
Motor Vehicle Registration Bureau  
are tenants in a modern building erected by Alton Warren, builder, and ADC, jointly.
- \* Meguier and Jones has extended and improved its original facility.
- \* A parking facility has been developed on another parcel of land.
- \* A speculative building is scheduled for erection on the remaining site.
- \* Land is reserved for widening of Franklin St. Trees have been planted in the area by the Portland Park Department.

Thus the nine acres have been totally redeveloped. This accomplishment represents an appreciable tax increase to the City of Portland, and has enabled the above listed firms to remain in the same locality while obtaining needed space and modern buildings.





**Bayside Park —**



**Before Renewal**



**Smith Street Tot-lot**

**the Mall — a public improvement —**



The Bayside Park area of Portland is a centrally located residential community covering 56.8 acres extending from the industrial area adjoining Back Bay, southerly to Congress Street.

It was designed for renewal on an entirely different basis than the first project in Vine-Deer-Chatham. This section consisted of a mixture of standard and substandard but improvable homes. Only a comparatively few were slated for demolition in the rehabilitation area.

This was the first program in the New England region attempting an extremely difficult voluntary rehabilitation program.

For the first time special economic aids, mortgage funds, consultation and information services were available to help residents undertake their own rehabilitation work with the assistance of both the Portland Renewal Authority staff and the Health Department.

A committee of bankers representing nine of Portland's banking institutions pledged loans for more than a quarter million dollars in the area to aid homeowners to alter their properties from substandard to standard classification.

Work on the Bayside Park Project was started in April of 1959 and is expected to be completed in 1963. Eleven acres have been cleared to provide enough recreation space and an area for new public housing. \*(As provided for in the 1961 voters' referendum.)

There were approximately 154 families and 18 small businesses involved in the project. Of the total 302 structures, 34 were standard on first inspection. At this writing 166 additional properties have been brought up to standard and 17

## THE BAYSIDE PARK PROJECT

have been demolished. It is now expected that within the coming year many more substandard dwellings will be rehabilitated.

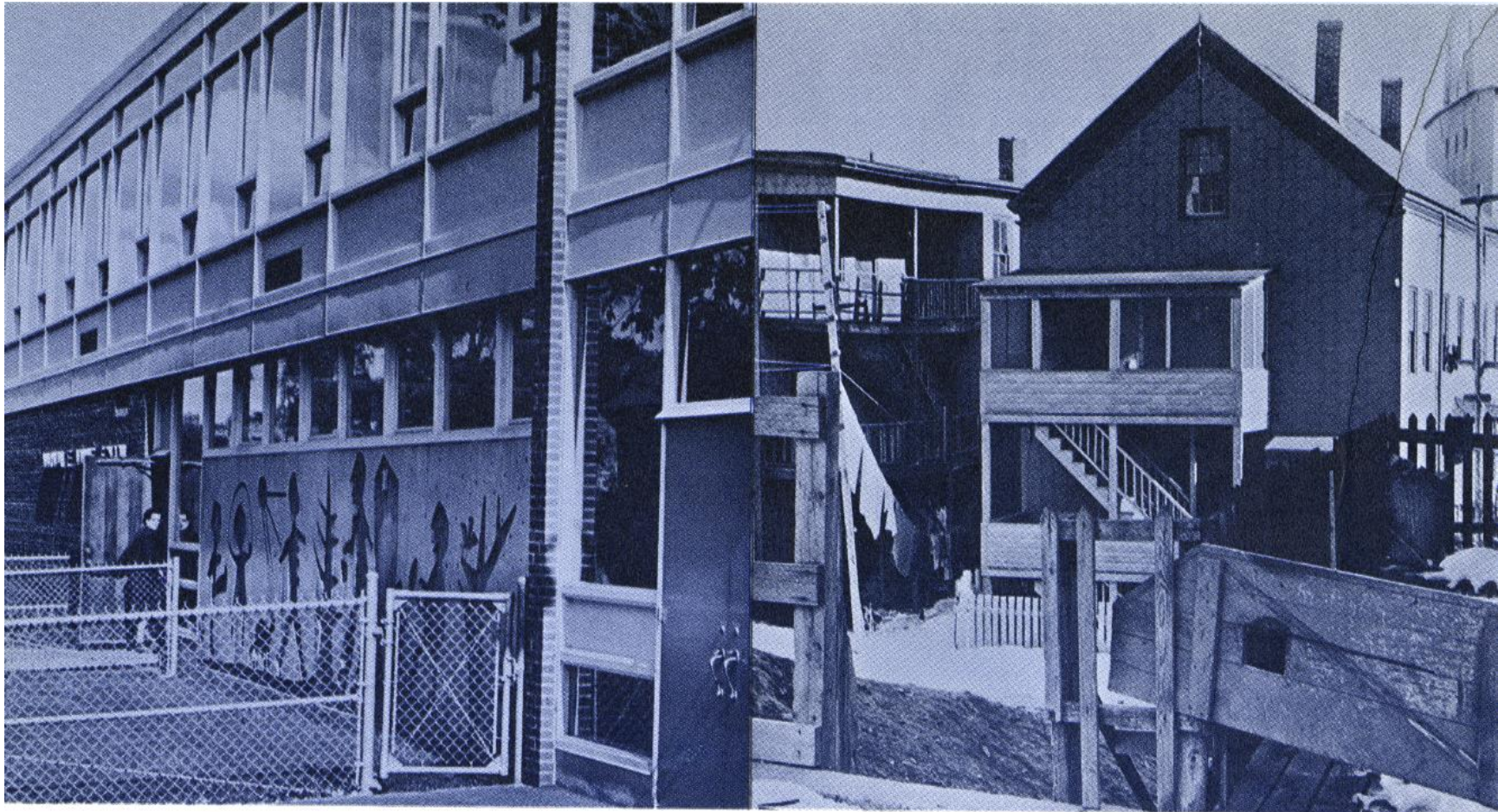
A rehabilitation program must include participation of residents and this was carried out through the formation of a Bayside neighborhood group, known as the Bayside Improvement Association, which met frequently with PRA officials to discuss plans and iron out problems. The problems are not all resolved, but steady progress is being made with the joint efforts of the community and the Renewal Authority.

This project also includes, with the assistance of the City departments, the renovation of streets, curbs, gutters, sidewalks and sewers, the enlargement of an existing playfield, the installation of street closures to reduce filter traffic, the development of a pedestrian mall, the construction of four "tot-lots" and the general upgrading of the neighborhood.

\* \* \*

\*An amendment to the original plan was submitted and approved by the Federal Government to permit erection of the Public housing units for which a referendum was passed.





Childrens' drawing — cast into concrete

New school and library — City of Portland contribution

Old homes will make way for new housing

Munjoy - South —



A choice section of Portland's residential area is represented in the newest renewal project approved by the Federal Government in March of 1962. The federal grant, amounting to two-thirds of the total project of \$2,709,009 — was issued in the amount of \$1.8 million. The City's contribution will be \$900,000 with partial credit of \$390,000 allowed for the erection of a new school and library.

Planning for this project was substantially aided by residents of the area and the Munjoy South Association which met regularly with officials and helped in refining the original plan so that it has now received community-wide acceptance.

Munjoy-South is an area on the Peninsula bordering scenic Casco Bay. It extends from half way up the Hill starting at Mountfort Street, to the Eastern Promenade and is bordered by Congress and Fore Streets.

This is the largest project to be undertaken by the Portland Renewal Authority and includes a combination of clearance, rehabilitation, conservation, and public improvement.

There are 79.4 acres in this highly congested area containing 1265 families, 580 structures, 15 small businesses and one small industry.

Most of the structures can be rehabilitated. However, to make way for new residential development in an 11-acre section where a majority of the structures is substandard, 116 buildings will be demolished or moved to other locations. If new private housing is developed in this area a substantial increase in tax revenue will be realized by the City. Approximately 51 substandard structures will also be demolished in a spot clearance program which will remove nuisance and fire-hazard buildings from the rehabilitation area.

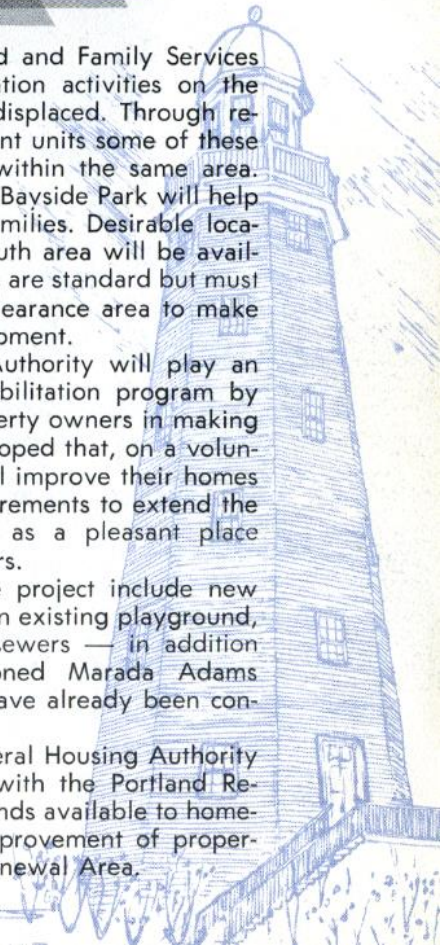
## MUNJOY SOUTH

Both PRA staff and Child and Family Services will focus their full relocation activities on the 294 families who will be displaced. Through rehabilitation of existing vacant units some of these families can be relocated within the same area. Proposed public housing in Bayside Park will help re-house other displaced families. Desirable locations within the Munjoy-South area will be available for those whose homes are standard but must be moved from the total clearance area to make way for residential development.

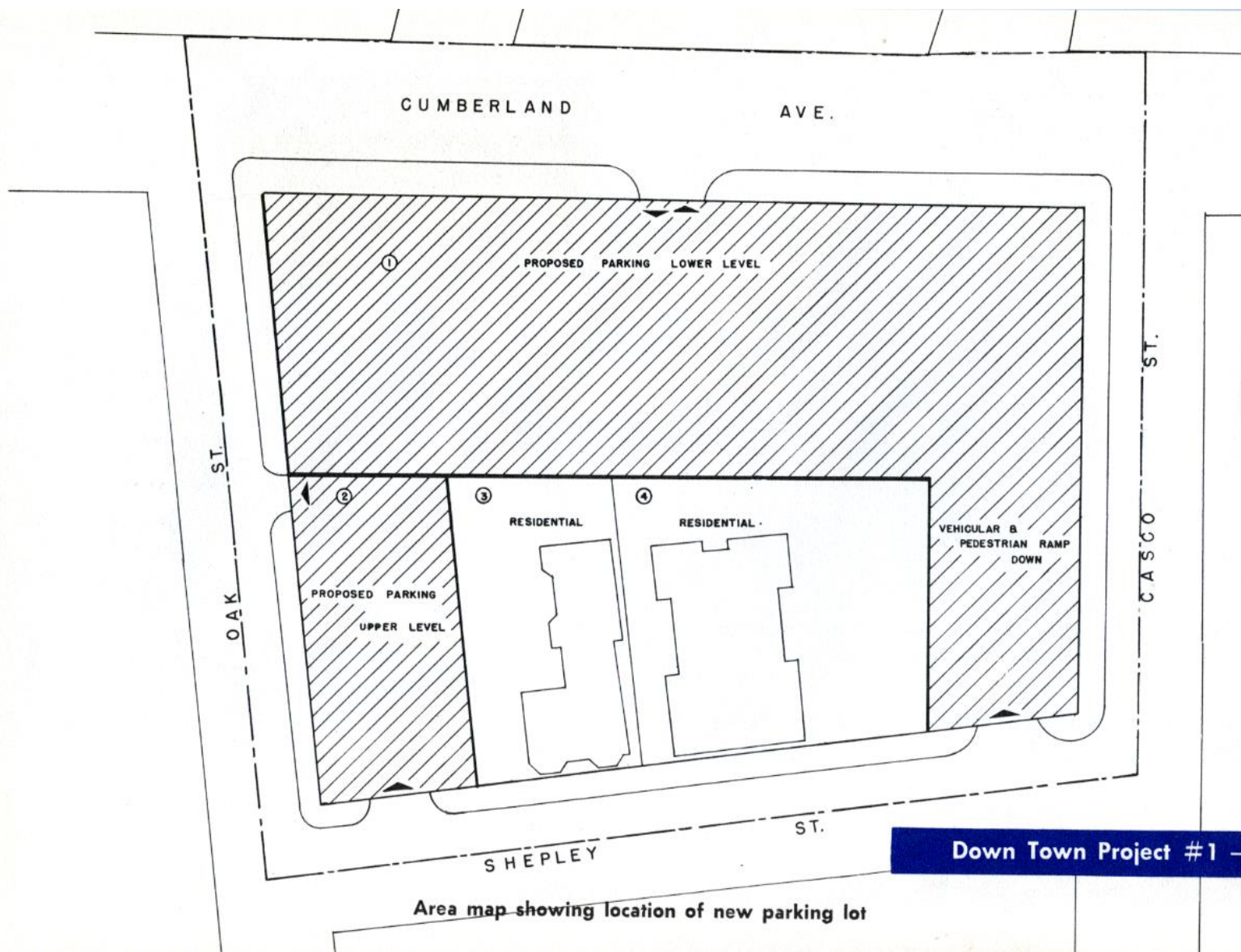
The Portland Renewal Authority will play an important role in the rehabilitation program by advising and assisting property owners in making home improvements. It is hoped that, on a voluntary basis, homeowners will improve their homes above minimum code requirements to extend the life of the neighborhood as a pleasant place which to live for many years.

City contributions to the project include new tot-lots, redevelopment of an existing playground, paved streets, curbs and sewers — in addition to the previously mentioned Marada Adams School and library which have already been constructed.

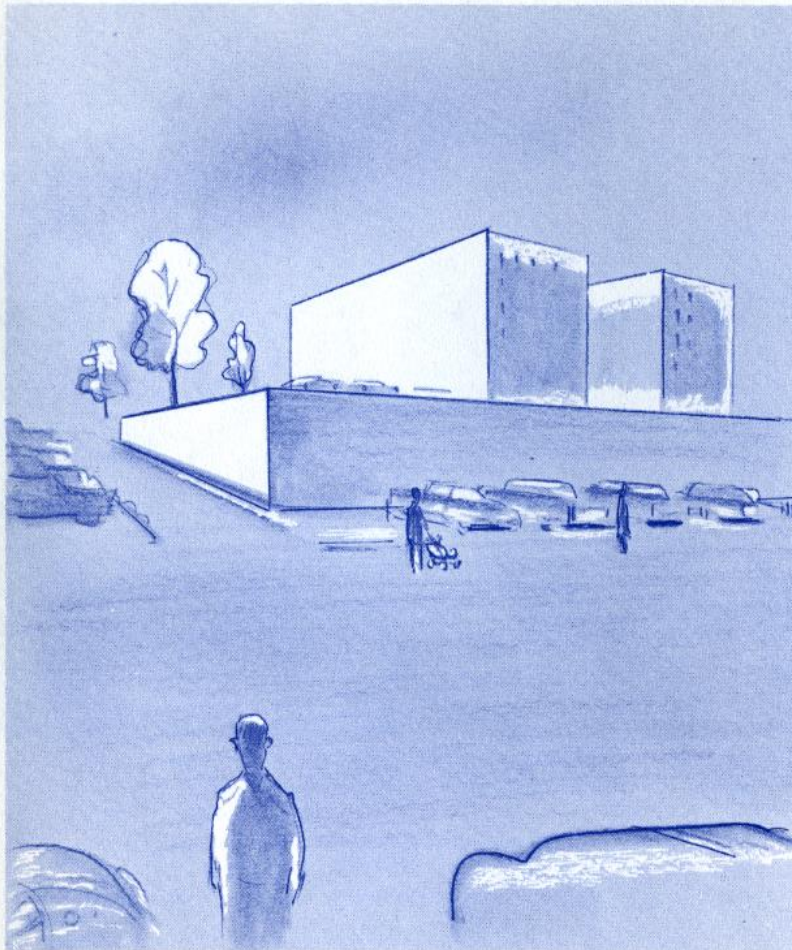
Local banks and the Federal Housing Authority stand ready to cooperate with the Portland Renewal Authority to make funds available to homeowners for purchase or improvement of properties in the Munjoy-South Renewal Area.







Area map showing location of new parking lot



**Artist's sketch of Down Town Project No. 1 — a City  
Parking lot**

## **DOWNTOWN PROJECT NO. 1**

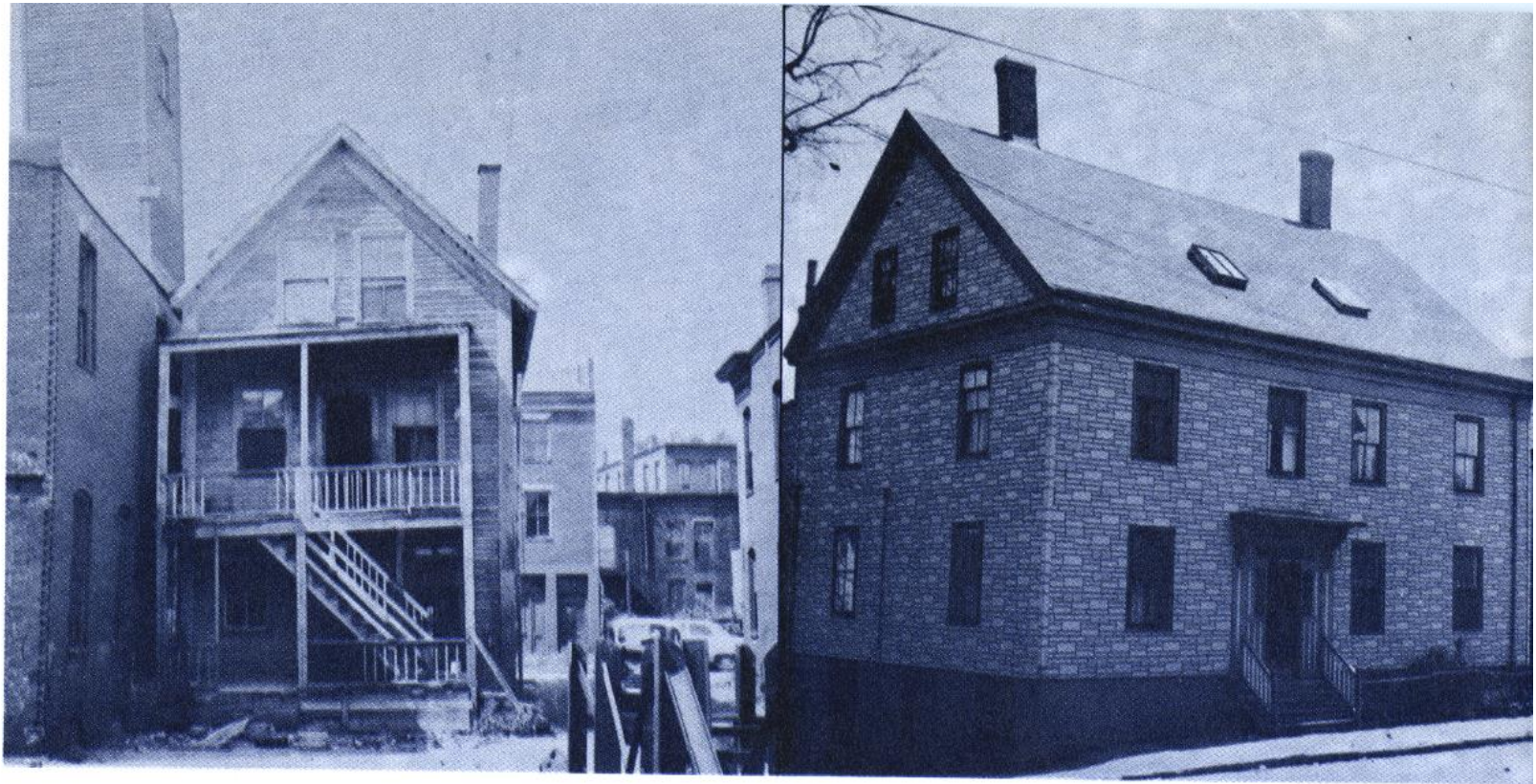
As part of a series of projects which will effect a rejuvenation of the Downtown area of Portland — Downtown Project No. 1 — was undertaken in 1961. This project embraces a major portion of 217 acres in a block bounded by Shepley, Oak, Casco Streets and Cumberland Avenue.

The objective is to provide a much needed off-street parking facility in convenient proximity to the central business district.

The initial planning application which had been approved by the Planning Board and the City Council, received Federal approval in December of 1961. Final planning is scheduled for completion in 1962.

Of much importance in this and all other Downtown planning projects is the close participation of the Greater Portland Chamber of Commerce — under whose auspices a group of community leaders formed a "Downtown Task Force" which is maintaining a continuing interest in the execution of the program.





from this . . .

to this . . .

**Relocation a Community Effort**





## RELOCATION —

# THE HAPPY STORIES FEW HEAR ABOUT

One of the factors basic to urban renewal is the successful relocation of families and businesses.

Moving sometimes requires difficult adjustments. The Authority has always offered as much assistance as possible to each family and business owner although it has not been accepted in some cases. Publicity has often put a disproportionate emphasis on the dissatisfaction of a few of these property owners. There is no doubt that some relocations are not completely successful. However, in nearly all cases, the relocated families have benefited by improved conditions.

We are presenting a few examples of these happy stories:

### **A matter of mutual understanding**

An elderly retired couple in poor health was residing in a substandard rent on the second floor

of a dilapidated building which had been acquired by the Renewal Authority.

A son, realizing the need of the parents to be near someone to care for them, purchased a low-cost two-family house that was fundamentally sound but badly run-down.

During off-hours and weekends, with some help from his brothers, this son made over the interior so that he could make a home for his parents on the first floor, and occupy the second with his wife and family. The grandparents pay the same rent as before but their living arrangements and general happiness are vastly improved.

The role played by the relocation counselor was one of helping each family to accept and adapt to the needs of the other so that the merger could be carried out harmoniously.

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### **Where to go with father**

It's a lot nicer to live in a freshly painted and larger apartment at Sagamore Village, than it was to live in a substandard cramped apartment in Bayside Park. Furthermore, the family making this move, with the help of the Portland Renewal Authority, now has room to provide a home for the wife's ailing father.

They are all happier than they were, and the young son has plenty of room for healthy outdoor play.

When the condemned apartment house in Bayside was acquired by the PRA for demolition, all resources were made available to this family needing better housing. Their moving expenses were paid by the Renewal Authority, and through counseling of the Child and Family Services it was possible to make arrangements with other sources to provide help in the deposits for utilities, since the breadwinner in this family had been long unemployed and had only recently found work. All three generations found congenial neighbors in Sagamore and are glad that the seemingly insoluble difficulties are overcome.



**Relocated in pleasant Sagamore Village**

### **Now they own their own home**

Less than a block from their original inadequate, hard-to-heat apartment which was minus a bathroom, this Bayside couple was introduced to and purchased an income-producing home of its own.

A yard, a new bathroom, and a lower heating expense are only a few of the assets unexpectedly acquired by this family through assistance available to renewal project residents for financing home purchases.

This family's newly acquired home has a rehabilitated additional apartment which was quickly rented. Now, as home owners, they are paying less than they were as tenants in their former inadequate apartment.



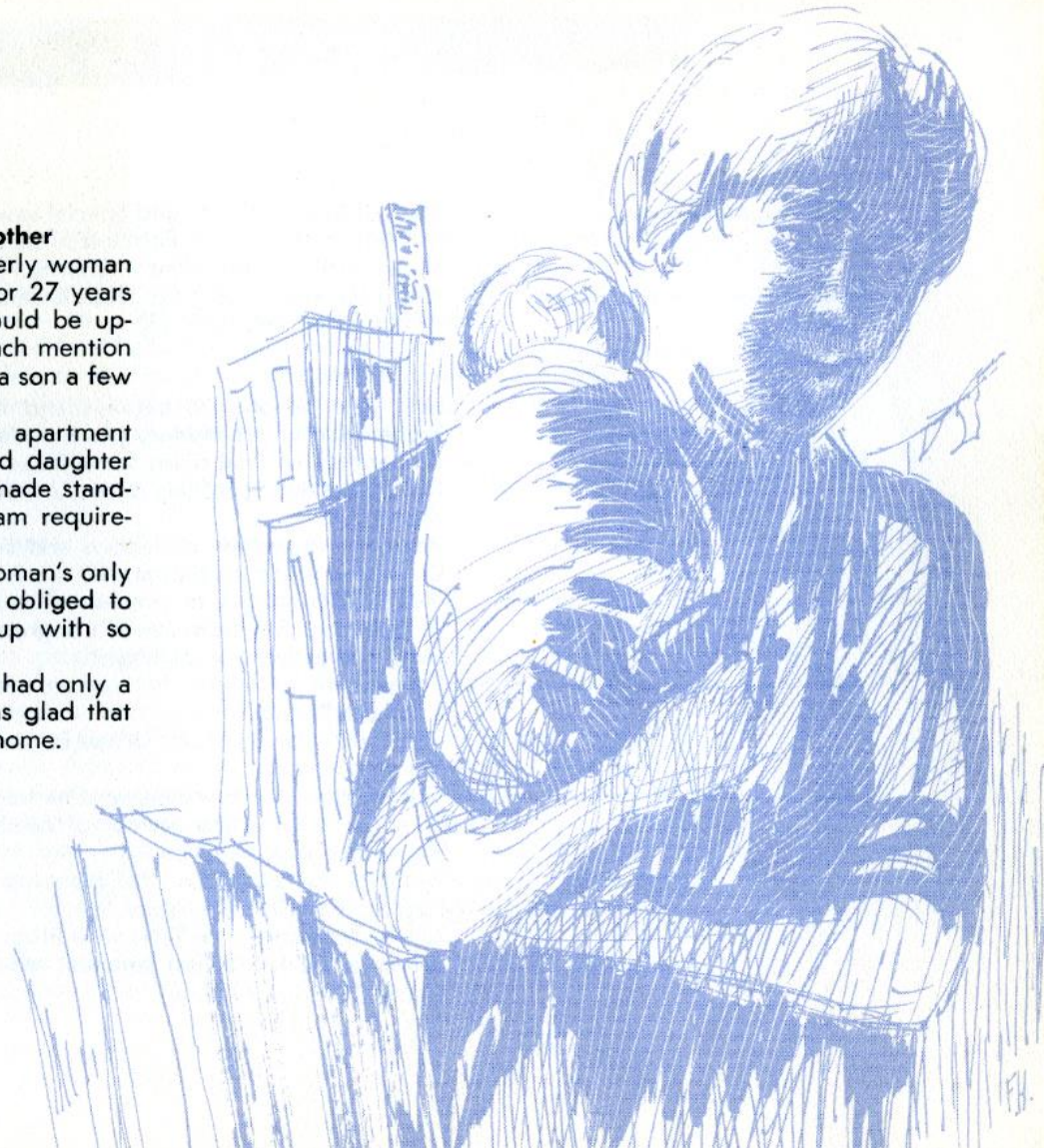
**One year of sunshine for an aging mother**

Relatives feared that moving an elderly woman who had resided in the same place for 27 years without sunshine or conveniences would be upsetting. Especially since she cried at each mention of moving and wanted to remain near a son a few doors away.

However, a nearby, sunny, heated apartment became available and the mother and daughter moved to it. The building had been made standard as a result of the renewal program requirements.

To everyone's surprise, the aging woman's only complaint was that she hadn't been obliged to move years ago instead of putting up with so many inconveniences for so long.

As it turned out, this fine old lady had only a year to live and the whole family was glad that it was spent in a bright and cheerful home.





## CALENDAR OF PROGRESS

- 1951** — State of Maine Private and Special Laws passed to create a public body in the City of Portland to be known as the Slum Clearance and Redevelopment Authority.\*
- 1952** — First meeting of original Slum Clearance and Redevelopment Authority on February 11.
- 1953** — First year devoted to surveys and the selection of projects. Preparation of preliminary plans undertaken.  
Preparation of final plans for selected projects and preparation for the upcoming testing of the Urban Renewal Program in the Maine courts.  
Review and restudy of reports and site plans.  
Concerted effort on the part of the Portland City Manager and Health Department to provide a housing inspection program to meet new requirements of Congress on reduction of housing costs and prevention of blight.
- 1954** — Preparation of plans for redevelopment of the Vine-Deer-Chatham Project.  
Successful testing of the Urban Redevelopment Program in the Maine courts.
- 1955** — Completion of the Vine-Deer-Chatham Plan, approval by the City Council and the receipt of funds from the Housing and Home Financing Agency.  
Filing of the application for planning funds to be used in the Bayside Park Renewal Area.  
City submission of a Workable Program as a basis for future action under the Urban Renewal requirements of the Housing Act of 1954.



# **FINANCIAL STATEMENT TO DECEMBER 31, 1961**

	Vine-Deer-Chatham UR Me. 1-1		Bayside Park Me. R-1		Munjoy South Me. R-2	
	Budget	Expenditures	Budget	Expenditures	Budget	Expenditures
Survey & Planning	\$ 45,393	\$ 45,322	\$ 95,985	\$ 94,462	\$ 70,000	\$ 58,536
Administration & Legal	56,524	56,773	105,988	74,353	156,989	-0-
Property Acquisition & Operation	7,789	6,133	43,631	33,723	75,455	-0-
Project Improvements	2,261	260	86,000	86,680	160,270	-0-
Relocation Costs	11,206	11,206	22,561	10,426	37,346	-0-
Land Clearance & Disposition	73,802	73,261	142,395	81,787	304,320	-0-
Rehabilitation of Property	-0-	-0-	12,375	9,352	123,739	-0-
Interest on Borrowed Funds	34,000	32,843	38,970	36,396	60,000	-0-
Income From Investments	-3,500	-3,287	-14,000	-16,129	-10,000	-0-
Real Estate Purchases	404,488	404,488	587,500	398,074	1,233,000	-0-
Government Inspection Fee	3,385	3,385	8,191	8,191	16,900	-0-
Reserve for Contingencies	229	-0-	616	-0-	45,656	-0-
Total Project Execution	635,577	630,384	1,130,212	817,315	2,273,675	58,536
Anticipated Close-out Adjustments	2,294	2,899	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Non-Cash Grants-in-Aid	163,857	163,857	405,544	341,152	*485,334	*385,776
Estimated Gross Project Cost	797,140	797,140	1,535,756		2,759,009	
Relocation Payments	14,000	13,537	45,150	15,018	61,500	-0-

\* Estimated Credit in the Amount of \$385,776 to be received for Marada Adams School



Total for All Projects

Budget	Expenditures
\$ 211,378	\$ 198,320
319,501	131,126
126,875	39,856
248,531	86,940
71,113	21,632
520,517	155,048
136,114	9,352
132,970	69,239
-27,500	-19,416
2,224,988	802,562
28,476	11,576
46,501	-0-
4,039,464	1,506,235
-2,294	2,899
1,054,735	549,633
5,091,905	
120,650	28,555

SHARING OF PROJECT COSTS

	Vine-Deer- Chatham	Bayside Park	Munjoy South	Total All Projects
Estimated Gross Project Cost	\$ 797,140	\$1,535,756	\$2,759,009	\$5,091,905
Less Anticipated Receipts from Sale of Project Land	133,675	128,936	50,000	312,611
Estimated Net Project Cost	663,465	1,406,820	2,709,009	4,779,294
Cost to City of Portland	221,155	468,940	903,003	1,593,098
Cash	57,296	63,396	417,669	538,361
Grants-in-Aid	163,859	405,544	485,334	1,054,737
Federal Share of Project Cost	442,310	937,880	1,806,006	3,186,196
Federal Relocation Grant	13,538	45,150	61,500	120,188
Total Estimated Federal Grant	455,848	983,030	1,867,506	3,306,196



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Portland renewal.

**PORTLAND RENEWAL  
AUTHORITY  
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Designed and printed by  
Maine Printing Company, Portland

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